

The open steppes are dominated by the sedge, Sahnia pauciflora. Ascending higher into the tussock, one is struck by the great abundance of the silvery-leaved Celmisia, C. incana which is a most striking feature of this mountain. In spite of the great quantities of these plants only two flowers were seen. Celmisia spectabilis was more generous however, and also Euphrasia cuneata which showed its attractive white flowers everywhere.

A strange cut-leaved buttercup aroused our curiosity. It was about 1 ft. tall and many seed heads were seen. After diligent searching, three bright yellow flowers were found and these measured about  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch across and had numerous petals. Reference to "Cheeseman" revealed this to be Ranunculus geraniifolius, a species I had not previously encountered. I was also thrilled to find my first specimen of Nth. Island Edelweiss, Leucogenes leontopodium, which with its flannel-like flowers and silver leaves, is extremely handsome. Boggy patches yielded specimens of the starry-flowered Liparophyllum gunnii, Drosera arcturi, tiny red rosettes of Drosera spathulata and another minute silvery plant, Gnaphalium paludosum.

After a three-hour climb the rocky summit was reached and peeping from beneath the cairn was a strange plant which vaguely resembled a Drapetes, but it was far more lax in growth. This proved to be Drapetes dieffenbachii var. laxa, which in Cheeseman's opinion, requires further study and may be proved to be distinct. Certainly I noticed the usual form of Drapetes dieffenbachii growing nearby and the difference was striking.

A magnificent view was obtained from the summit and some realisation was gained of the immense expanse of tussock and scrub country separating us from the hut village which could be seen far in the distance on Ruapehu's slopes. Far below us were several tarns, and patches of bush in the mountain valleys looked tempting for further botanical exploration if only one had the time and energy to spare.

K. Wood.

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#### WAYSIDE COLOUR

On a recent trip to the South Island I could not help but notice the beautiful colours of the wayside flowers, or perhaps I should call them weeds. Weeds or otherwise, they certainly made a riot of colour that could compete with any park.

Through the McKenzie country, ochre grass was brightened with the yellow of the Hawk-weed (Crepis capillaris). Californian thistles were topped with mauve and rich borders of Vipers bugloss (Echium vulgare) completed the picture. In some places blooms of pink and white yarrow (Achillea millefolium) predominated.

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On the road to Lake Ohau contrasting, the blue of the bugloss in one part I saw deep crimson sorrel (Rumex acetosella) backed with the rich green of the lucerne (Medicago sativa) and soft mauve of the thistle tops.

The Lindis Pass appeared to be huge humps covered with yellow ochre plush, then suddenly silver-grey mica schist with masses of creamy-coloured gooseberry bushes clinging to the hillside.

The barren sand of Bannockburn was enlivened by the heliotrope of the clumps of mallow (Malva sylvestris), again the blue of the bugloss, greenish-white of the Bokhara clover (Melilotus albus) and the orange of the eschscholtzias (E. californica). These brighter colours were toned down by the more neutral colour of the tussocks and the pinkish-mauve of the haresfoot trefoil (Trifolium arvense).

Leaving Manapouri the scheme was of two shades - yellow ochre and ruby red, produced by the sweet vernal grass (Anthoxanthum odoratum) and the bidi bids (Acaena microphylla). Through this ran the grey ribbon of the road.

The memory remains of colour harmonies, some rich, some soft, some brilliant, with a variety not seen in the North Island.

Ruth Coyle.

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### AUSTRALIAN ORCHIDS ON DISPLAY

Although some of the halls at the Auckland Museum have been closed during the building of the extension, the native plant table has been maintained, and this month Mr. E. D. Hatch supplied us with a pot of Australian orchids for display. Mr. Hatch revised the orchids of New Zealand in a series of papers which were published in the Transactions of the Royal Society of New Zealand and has studied the Australian relatives for some years. He has grown a number of the Australian species and the first exhibited in flower is Pterostylis coccinea. This plant is from open grassland on the Barrington Tops plateau in New South Wales, and has been in cultivation in Auckland since 1954. More or less allied to the New Zealand P. trullifolia, the flowering plants appear first and are followed by the rosette plants. The plant form is determined by the size of the tuber, the dividing line being round about 11mm. diameter. Anything below this will produce a rosette and above it a flower. This red-flowered colour-form is the normal type but a rare green-flowered form does also occur. Rosettes often arise from dormant buds at the base of the flowering plants, as many as 3 having been recorded. The plants appear in December, flower in January-February and the rosettes die back in September.

The next Pterostylis to be exhibited will probably come into flower in May.